

# THE INDIRECT OBJECT

## Recognize an indirect object when you find one.

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Indirect objects are rare. You can read for paragraphs before you encounter one. For an indirect object to appear, a **sentence** must first have a **direct object**.

Direct objects follow **transitive verbs** (a type of **action verb**). If you can identify the **subject** and **verb** in a sentence, then finding the direct object—*if one exists*—is easy.

Just remember this simple formula:

**Subject** + **Verb** + *What? or Who?* = **Direct Object**

Here are examples of the formula in action:

Jim built a **sandcastle** on the beach.

**Jim** = subject; **built** = verb. Jim built *what?* **Sandcastle** = direct object.

Sammy and Maria brought **Billie Lou** to the party.

**Sammy, Maria** = subjects; **brought** = verb. Sammy and Maria brought *who?* **Billie Lou** = direct object.

To explain the broken lamp, we told a **lie**.

**We** = subject; **told** = verb. We told *what?* **Lie** = direct object.

Whoever (or whatever) gets that direct object is the *indirect* object.

Consider these new versions of the sentences above:

Jim built **his granddaughter** a sandcastle on the beach.

**Jim** = subject; **built** = verb. Jim built *what?* **Sandcastle** = direct object. Who got that sandcastle? **Granddaughter** = indirect object.

So that Darren would have company at the party, Sammy and Maria brought **him** a blind date.

**Sammy, Maria** = subjects; **brought** = verb. Sammy and Maria brought *who*?  
**Blind date** = direct object. Who got that blind date? **Him** = indirect object.

To explain the broken lamp, we told **Mom** a lie.

**We** = subject; **told** = verb. We told *what*? **Lie** = direct object. Who got that lie?  
**Mom** = indirect object.

## **An indirect object will sometimes begin with *to* or *for*.**

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Occasionally, the indirect object will occur in a **prepositional phrase**.

Read these two sentences:

Tomas paid **the mechanic** 200 dollars to fix the squeaky brakes.

Tomas paid 200 dollars **to the mechanic** to fix the squeaky brakes.

In both versions, the **mechanic** (*indirect object*) receives the **200 dollars** (*direct object*).

When the direct object is a **pronoun** rather than a **noun**, putting the indirect object in a prepositional phrase often becomes a necessary modification. The **preposition** smooths out the sentence.

Consider this example:

Leslie did not have enough money for the sandwich, so Smitty purchased **her** it.

Blech! That version is awful! But now try the sentence with the indirect object after a preposition:

Leslie did not have enough money for the sandwich, so Smitty purchased it **for her**.

Locating the indirect object **her** in a prepositional phrase makes the sentence less choppy!

Now read this example:

After Michael helped himself to the stuffing, he passed **us** it.

Ewww! This version is awful too! But with a quick fix, we can solve the problem:

After Michael helped himself to the stuffing, he passed it **to us**.

With the indirect object **us** in a prepositional phrase, we have a smooth sentence!

